

PETARA, OR SEA DYAK GODS.

BY

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PETARA, otherwise *Betara*, is, according to MARSDEN, Sanskrit, and adopted into Malay from the Hindu system, and applied to various mythological personages; but whatever be its meaning and application in Malay, in Sea Dyak—a language akin to Malay—it is the one word to denote Deity. *Petara* is God, and corresponds in idea to the *Elohim* of the Old Testament.

But to elucidate the use of the term, we cannot turn to dictionary and treatises. There is no literature to which we can appeal. The Sea Dyaks never had their language committed to writing before the Missionaries began to work amongst them. For our knowledge of their belief, we have to depend upon what individuals tell us, and upon what we can gather from various kinds of *pengap*—long songs or recitations made at certain semi-sacred services, which are invocations to supernatural powers. These are handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth; but only those who are curious and diligent enough, and have sufficiently capacious memories, are able to learn and repeat them; and, as may be expected, in course of transmission from age to age, they undergo alteration, but mostly, I believe, in the way of addition. This tendency to change is evident from the fact that, in different tribes or clans, different renderings of the *pengap*, and different accounts of individual belief may be found. What follows in this Paper is gathered from the Balau and Saribus tribes of Dyaks.

A very common statement of Dyaks, and one which may easily mislead those who have only a superficial acquaintance with them and their thought, is that *Petara* is equivalent to *Allah Taala*, or

Tuhan Allah. "What the Malays call *Allah Taala*, we call "*Petara*" is a very common saying. And it is true in so far as both mean Deity; but when we investigate the character represented under these two terms, an immense difference will be found between them, as will appear in the sequel. What *Allah Taala* is, we know; what *Petara* is, I attempt to show.

I have not unfrequently been told by Dyaks that there is only one *Petara*, but I believe the assertion was always made upon very little thought. The word itself does not help us to determine either for monotheism or for polytheism, because there are no distinct forms for singular and plural in Sea Dyak. To us the word looks like a singular noun, and this appearance may have suggested to some that Dyaks believe in a hierarchy of subordinate supernatural beings with one God—*Petara*—above all. I have been told, indeed, that, among the ancients, *Petara* was represented as :—

Patu, nadai apai
Endang nadai indai.

An orphan, without father,
 Ever without mother.

which would seem to imply an eternal unchangeable being, without beginning, without end. And this idea is perhaps slightly favoured by a passage in a *pengap*. In the song of the Head Feast, ⁽¹⁾ the general object of the recitation is to "fetch," that is, invoke the presence of, *Singalang Burong* at the feast, and certain messengers are lauded, who carry the invitation from the earth to his abode in the skies. Now these are represented as passing on their way the house of *Petara*, who is described as an individual being, and who is requested to come to the feast. There may be here the relic of a belief in one God above all, and distinct from all; but this belief, notwithstanding what an individual Dyak may occasionally say, must be pronounced to be now no longer really entertained.

The general belief is that there are many *Petaras*; in fact, as many *Petaras* as men. Each man, they say, has his own peculiar *Petara*, his own tutelary Deity. "One man has one *Petara*,

(1) Straits Asiatic Journal, No. 2, p. 123.

"another man another"—*Jai orang jai Petara*. "A wretched man, a wretched *Petara*," is a common expression which professes to give the reason why any particular Dyak is poor and miserable—"He is a miserable man, because his *Petara* is miserable." The rich and poor are credited with rich and poor *Petaras* respectively, hence the state of Dyak gods may be inferred from the varying outward circumstances of men below. At the beginning of the yearly farming operations, the Dyak will address the unseen powers thus: *O kita Petara O kita Ini Inda*—"O ye gods, O ye *Ini Inda*." Of *Ini Inda* I have not been able to get any special account; but from the use of *Ini*, grandmother, it evidently refers to female deities; or it may be only another appellation of *Kita Petara*. Now, little as this is, it is unmistakeable evidence that polytheism must be regarded as the foundation of Sea Dyak religion. But the whole subject is one upon which the generality of Dyaks are very hazy, and not one of them, it may be, could give a connected and lucid account of their belief. They are not given to reasoning upon their traditions, and when an European brings the subject before them, they show a very decided unpreparedness.

The use of the term *Petara* is sufficiently elastic to be applied to men. Not unfrequently have I heard them say of us white men: "They are *Petara*." Our superior knowledge and civilization are so far above their own level, that we appear to them to partake of the supernatural. It is possible, however, that this is merely a bit of flattery to white men. When I have remonstrated with them on this application of the term, they have explained that they only mean that we appear to manifest more of the power of *Petara*, that to themselves, in what we can do and teach, we are as gods. Mr. Low, in his paper on the Sultans of Bruni, ⁽²⁾ tells us that it was the title of the rulers of the ancient kingdoms of Menjapahit and Sulok. It is not uninteresting to compare with this the application of the Hebrew *Elohim* to judges, as vice-gerents of God. (Psalm LXXXII. 6.)

But some of the *pengap* will tell us more about *Petara* than can be got from the conversation of the natives, and the first

(2) Straits Asiatic Journal, No. 5, pp. 1-16.

which I lay under contribution is the *pengap* of the *Besant*, a ceremony which is performed over children, and less frequently over invalids, for their recovery. It is much in vogue amongst the Balaus, but seldom resorted to, I think, by the other clans of Sea Dyaks. Like all Dyak lore, it is prolix in the extreme, and deluged with meaningless verbosity. I only refer to such points in it as will illustrate my subject.

The object of the *Besant* is to obtain the presence and assistance of all *Petaras* on behalf of the child—that he may become strong in body, skilful in work, successful in farming, brave in war, and long in life. This is about the sum total of the essential significance of the ceremony. The performers are *manangs*, medicine men, who profess to have a special acquaintance with *Petaras* above, and with the secrets of Hades beneath, and to exercise a magic influence over all spirits and powers which produce disease among their countrymen. The performer then directs his song to the *Petaras* above, and implores them to look favourably upon the child. Somewhere at the commencement of the function, a sacrifice is offered, when the *Manangs* sing as follows :—

Raja Petara bla ngemata,
Seragendah bla meda,
Ngemeran ka subak tanah lang.
Seragendi bla meda,
Ngemeran ka ai mesei puloh grunong sanggang.
Seleledu bla meda,
Ngemeran ka jumpu mesei jugu bejampong lempang.
Seleleding bla meda,
Ngemeran ka tinting lurus mematang.
Silingiling bla meda,
Ngemeran ka pating sega nsluang.
Sengungong bla meda,
Ngemeran ka bungkong mesei benong balang.
Bunsu Rembia bla meda,
Ngemeran ka jengka tapang bedindang.
Bunsu Kamba bla meda,
Ngemeran ka bila maram jarang.

Kings of Gods all look.

Seragendah who has charge of the stiff, clay earth.

Seragendi who has charge of the waters of the Hawkbell Island.

Seleledu who has charge of the little hills, like *topnots* of the *bejampong* bird.

Seleleding who has charge of the highlands straight and well defined.

Selingiling who has charge of the twigs of the *sega* rotan.

Sengungong who has charge of the full grown knotted branches.

Bunsu Rembia Abu who has charge of the bends of the widespreading *tapang* branches.

Bunsu Kamba equally looks down, who has charge of the plants of thin *maram*.

All these beings are entreated to accept the offering. And these Royal *Petaras* are by no means all whose aid is asked. Others follow :—

Bemata Raja Petara bla ngelala sampol nilik.

Ari remang rarat bla nampai ngijap, baka keempat kajang sabidang.

Ari pandau banyak ⁽¹⁾ *bla nampai Petara Gnyak baka pantak labong palang.*

Ari pintau kamarau sanggan, bla ngilan Petara Radan baka ti olih likau nabau bekengkang.

Ari dinding ari bla nampai maremi Petara Menani, manah mati baka kaki long tetukang.

Ari bulan bla nampai Petara Tebaran, betempan kaki subang.

Ari mata-ari bla maremi Petara kami manah mati, baka segundi manang begitang.

Ari jerit tisi langit bla nampai Petara Megit, baka kepit tanggi tudong temelang.

Ari pandau bunya Petara Megu bla nampai meki langgu katunsong laiang.

The Royal *Petaras* having eyes, all recognise, altogether look down.

From the floating cloud, like an evenly cut *kajang*, they all look and wink.

(1) This word is probably a comparatively late importation. "Maioh" is Dyak for "many."

From the Pleiades ⁽¹⁾, like the glistening patterns of the long flowing turbans, looks also *Petara Guyak*.

From the Milky Way ⁽²⁾, like golden rings of the *naban* snake, *Petara Radau* is observing.

From the rainbow ⁽³⁾ also, beautiful in dying like the feet of an opened box, *Petara Menani* is looking and bending.

From the moon, like a fasting earring also, *Petara Tebaran* is looking.

From the sun beautiful in setting, like the hanging *segundi* ⁽⁴⁾ of the *manangs*, our *Petara* is bending down.

From the end of heaven, like the binding band of the *tanggi*, *Petara Megit* is looking.

From the evening star as big as the bud of the red hibiscus, *Petara Megu* is looking.

Odd and ludicrous as this is, in its comparison of great things with small, its teaching is very clear. As men have their personal tutelary deities, so have the different parts of the natural world. The soil, the hills, and the trees have their gods, through whose guardianship they produce their fruits. And the sun, moon, stars, and clouds are peopled with deities, whose favour is invoked, whose look in itself is supposed to convey a blessing.

But these *Petaras* are very human-like gods; for they are represented as making answer to the supplications of the *manangs*—"How shall we not look after and guard the child, for next year ⁽⁵⁾ "you will make us a grand feast of rice and pork, and fish, and "venison, cakes and drink:"—carnal gods delighting in a good feed, such as the Dyaks themselves keenly appreciate.

In this way the attention of these *Petaras* is supposed to have been aroused, and a promise to undertake the child's welfare obtained. At this point, according to the assertions of the *manangs*,

(1) Literally: "the many stars," *i.e.*, many in one cluster.

(2) Literally: "the high ridges of long drought."

(3) "Dinding ari," "protection of the day," is a small part of the rainbow appearing just above the horizon. The whole bow is called "Anak Raja."

(4) "Segundi," a vessel used by the *manangs* in their incantations on behalf of the sick.

(5) This refers to the concluding half of the ceremony which is performed at some subsequent times.

the *Petaras* from some point in the firmament shake their charms in the direction of the child :—

“ Since we have looked down,

“ Come now, friends,

“ Let us, in a company, wave the medicine charms.”

And so they wave the shadow of their magical influence upon the child.

But there are still more *Petaras* to come :—

Pupus Petara kebong langit,

Niu Petara puchok kaiyu.

Having finished the *Petaras* in mid-heavens,

We come to the *Petaras* of the tree-tops.

And they sing of the gods inhabiting trees, and among these are monkeys, birds, and insects, or spirits of them. From the trees they come to the land :—

Pupus Petara puchok kuiyu,

Nelah Petara tengah tanah.

Having finished the *Petaras* of the tree-tops,

We mention the *Petaras* in the midst of the earth.

In this connection, many more *Petaras* are recounted.

But the *Besant* tells something more than the number and names of gods. The whole function consists of two celebrations, the second of which takes place at an interval of a year, and sometimes more, after the first. In the first part, the *Petaras* are “brought” to some point in the firmament, or it may be, to some neighbouring hill, from which they see the child. In the second, they are “brought” to the house where the ceremony is being performed, in order to leave there the magic virtue of their presence. A large part of the incantation is the same in both; and at a certain part of the second the *Petaras* are represented as saying :—

“ Before we have looked down,

“ Now a company of men are inviting us to the feast.”

And in compliance with the invitation, they prepare for the journey earthwards. The female *Petaras* are described, at great

length, as putting on their finest garments and most valuable ornaments—brass rings round their bodies, necklaces of precious stones, earrings and head decorations, beads and hawkbells, and everything, in short, to delight feminine taste and beauty. Then the male *Petaras* do the same, and equip themselves with waist-cloth, coat and turban, and brass ornaments on arms and legs. A start is then made with several of the goddesses, renowned for their knowledge of the way as guides, to lead the way; but these prove to be sadly at fault, for, after going some distance, they find the road leads to nowhere, and they have to retrace their steps, and go by way of the sun and moon and stars; and from the stars they get at some peculiar grassy spot, where they find a trunk of a fallen tree down which they walk to our lower regions. Here they sing how these *Petaras* from the skies are joined by all the *Petaras* of the hills and trees and lowlands, and by *Salampandai*: and then all together, in one motley company, they wend their way to the house where the *Besant* is being made. Just as a Dyak would bathe after coming from a long walk, so these gods and goddesses are described as bathing, and their beauty descanted upon. Their approach to the house I pass over, but just before going up the ladder into it, the elder *Petaras* think it necessary to give a moral admonition to the whole company:—

Ka abi rumah anang meda;

Ŭggai ka ngumbai ngiga serenti jani.

Ka galenggang anang nentang;

Ŭggai ka ngumbai ngiga tugang manok laki.

Ka ruai anang nampai;

Ŭggai ka ngumbai ngiga laki.

Ka bilik anang nilik;

Ŭggai ka ngumbai ngiga tajau menyadi.

Ka sadau anang ngilau;

Ŭggai ka ngumbai ngiga padi.

To the space under the house do not look;

Lest they should think you seek a pig's tusk.

To the henroost do not sit opposite;

Lest they should think you seek a tail feather of the fighting cock.

To the verandah do not cast your eyes ;
 Lest they should think you are seeking a husband.
 Into the room do not peep ;
 Lest they should think you are seeking a jar.
 To the attic do not look up ;
 Lest they should think you are seeking rice.

After this they are supposed to enter the house, of course an invisible company ; and to partake of the good things of the feast together with the Dyaks, gods and men feeding together in harmony. After all is over they return to their respective abodes.

It is a miserable, low and earthly conception of God and gods ; hardly perhaps to be called belief in gods, but belief in beings just like themselves : yet they are supposed to be such as can bestow the highest blessings Dyaks naturally desire. The grosser the nature of a people, the grosser will be their conception of deities or deity. We can hardly expect a high and spiritual conception of deity from Dyaks in their present intellectual condition and low civilization. Their's is a conception which produces no noble aspirations, and has no power to raise the character ; yet it has a touching interest for the Christian student, for it enshrines this great truth, that man needs intercommunion with the Deity in order to live a true life. The Dyak works this out in a way which most effectually appeals to his capacities and sympathies.

I turn now to a *sampi*, an invocation often said at the commencement of the yearly rice-farming ; in other words, a prayer to those superior powers which are supposed to preside over the growth of rice. First of all, *Pulang Gana* is invoked ; then the Sun, who is called *Datu Patinggi Mata-ari*, and his light-giving, heat-giving influence recounted in song. After the Sun comes a bird, the *Kajira* ; then the padi spirit (*Saniang Padi*), then the sacred birds, that is, those whose flight and notes are observed as omens ; all these are prayed to give their presence. Leaving the birds, the performer comes to *Petara* "whom he also calls, whom he also "invokes." "What *Petara*," it is asked, "do you invoke ?" The answer is : "*Petara* who cannot be empty-handed, who cannot be "barren, who cannot be wrong, who cannot be unclean ;" and thereupon follow their names :—*Sanggul Labong, Pinang Ipong,*

Kling Bungai Nuiying, Laja Bungai Jawa, Batu Imu, Batu Nyantan, Batu Nyantar, Batu Gawa, Batu Nyanggak, Nyawin, Jamba, Pandong, Kendawang, Panggau, Apai Mapai, Kling; each from his mythical habitation "come all, come every one; without "stragglers, without deserters." And this call of the sons of men is heard, and the *Petaras* make answer: "Be well and happy, ye "sons of men living in the world."

"You give us rice,

"You give us cakes;

"You give us rice-beer,

"You give us spirit;

"You give us an offering,

"You give us a spread.

"If you farm, all alike shall get padi.

"If you go to war, all alike shall get a head.

"If you sleep, all alike shall have good dreams.

"If you trade, all alike shall be skilful in selling.

"In your hands, all alike shall be effective.

"In just dealing, all alike shall have the same heart.

"In discourse, all alike shall be skilful and connected.

Then, leaving this company of *Petaras*, the *sampi* proceeds to invoke in a special manner one particular *Petara*, of whom more is said than of all the proceeding. This is *Ini Andan Petara Buban*—Grandmother *Andan*, the grey-haired *Petara*." Her qualities are complete. "She has a coat for thunder and heat; she "is strong against the lightning, and endures in the rain, and is "brave in the darkness. To cease working is impossible to her. "In the house her hands are never idle, in talking her speech is "pure, her heart is full of understanding. And this is why she is "called, why she is beckoned to, why she is offered sacrifice, why "a feast is spread." She can communicate these powers to her servants. Moreover, they would obtain her assistance as being "the chief-keeper of the broad lands and immenses, where they "may farm and fill the padi bins; the chief-keeper of the long "winding river, where they may beat the strong *tuba* root; as "chief-keeper of the great rock, the parent stone, where they may "sharpen the steel-edged weapons; as chief-keeper of the bee- "trees, where they may shake the sparks of the burning torches."

But to watch over the farm and guard it from evils is her special province; and for this her presence is specially desired.

“ If the *mpangau* ⁽¹⁾ should hover over it, let her shake at them the sparks of fire.

“ If the *bengas* ⁽²⁾ should approach, let her squeeze the juice of the strong tuba root.

“ If the ants should come forth, let her rub it (the farm) with a rag dipped in coal-tar.

“ If the locusts should run over it, let her douch them with oil over a bottle full.

“ If the pigs should come near, let her set traps all day long.

“ If the deer should get near it, let her kill them with bamboo spikes.

“ If the mouse-deer should have a look at it, let her set snares all the day long.

“ If the roe should step over it, let her set bamboo traps.

“ If the sparrows should peck at it, let her fetch a little gutta of the *tekalong* tree.

“ If the monkeys should injure it, let her fix a rotan snare.

“ That there may be nothing to hurt it, nothing to interfere with it.”

In answer to their entreaty, she replies in a similar way to the *Petaras* before mentioned, and pronounces upon them her blessings of success, prosperity and wealth, and skill, as a return for the offering made to her. And thus the Dyak thinks to buy his padi crop from the powers above.

Ini Andan, as she is preparing to take leave of her worshippers according to the *sampi*, bestows some charms and magical medicines, mostly in the form of stones, and afterwards gives a parting exhortation :—

“ Hear my teaching, ye sons of men.

“ When you farm, be industrious in work.

“ When you sleep, do not be over-much slaves of the eyes.

“ When people assemble, do not forget to ask the news.

(1) A kind of bug.

(2) A peculiar insect destructive to the young padi plants.

- " Do not quarrel with others.
- " Do not give your friends bad names.
- " Corrupt speech do not utter.
- " Do not be envious of one another.
- " And you will all alike get padi.
- " All alike be clean of heart.
- " All alike be clever of speech.

- " I now make haste to return.
- " I use the wind as my ladder.
- " I go to the crashing whirlwind.
- " I return to my country in the cloudy moon."

Traditionary lore and popular thought thus tell the same tale; the latter imagines the universe peopled with many gods, so that each man has his own guardian deity; and the former professes to put before us who and what, at least, some of these are. The traces of a belief in the unity of deity referred to at the beginning of this paper, is at most but a faint echo of an ancient and purer faith; a faith buried long ago in more earthly ideas. Yet even now Dyaks are met with who say that there is only one *Petara*; but when they are confronted with the teaching of the *pengap*, and with unmistakeable assertions of gods many, they explain this unity as implying nothing more than a unity of origin. In the beginning of things there was one *Petara* just as there was one human being; and this *Petara*, was the ancestor of a whole family of *Petaras* in heaven and earth, just as the first man was the ancestor of the inhabitants of the world. But this unity of origin does not amount in their minds to a conception of a First Great Cause; yet it is an echo of a belief which is still a silent witness to the One True God.

It has been said that "every form of polytheism is sprung from "nature worship." It is very clear that Dyak gods are begotten of nature's manifold manifestations. *Ini Andan* seems a concrete expression of her generating producing power. The sun and moon, stars and clouds, the earth with its hills and trees and natural fertility, are all channels of beneficial influences to man, and the Dyak feels his dependence upon them; he has to conduct his simple farming subject to their operations; his rice-crop depends

upon the weather, and upon freedom from many noxious pests over which he feels little or no control—rats, locusts and insects innumerable; he gets gain from the products of the jungle, and loves its fruits: high hills surrounded with floating clouds, and the violent thunder storms, are regarded with something of mysterious awe; he must invoke these powers, for he wants them to be on his side in the weary work of life's toils, and the struggle for existence; and thus he imagines each phenomenon to be the working of a god, and worships the gods he has imagined.

I must now refer to three beings which have been mentioned before, and which occupy a peculiar position in Dyak belief, as holding definite functions in the working of the world. These are *Salampandai*, *Pulang Gana*, and *Singalang Burong*.

Salampandai is a female spirit, and the maker of men, some say by her own independent power, some by command of *Petara*. The latter relate that in the beginning *Petara* commanded her to make a man, and she made one of stone, but it could not speak and *Petara* refused to accept it. She set to work again and fashioned one of iron, but neither could that speak, and so was rejected. The third time she made one of clay which had the power of speech, and *Petara* was pleased, and said: "Good is the man you have made, let him be the ancestor of men." And so *Salampandai* ever afterwards formed human beings, and is forming them now, at her anvil in the unseen regions. There she hammers out children as they are born into the world, and when each one is formed it is presented to *Petara*, who asks: "What would you like to handle and use?" If it answer: "The *parang*, the sword and spear," *Petara* pronounces it a boy; but if it answer: "Cotton and the spinning wheel," *Petara* pronounces it a female. Thus they are determined boys or girls according to their own choice.

Another theory makes *Petara* the immediate creator of men, and of all things:—

"*Langit Petara dulu mibit,*
 "*Mesei dunggul manok banda.*
 "*Tanah Petara dulu ngaga,*
 "*Mesei buah mbawang blanja.*

- " *Ai Petara dulu ngiri,*
 " *Mesei linti tali besara.*
 " *Tanah lang Petara dulu nenchang,*
 " *Nyadi mensia.*
 " *Petara first stretched out the heavens,*
 " *As big as the comb of the red-feathered cock.*
 " *The earth Petara first created,*
 " *As big as the fruit of the horse mango.*
 " *The waters Petara first poured out,*
 " *As great as the strands of the rotan rope.*
 " *The stiff clay Petara first beat out,*
 " *And it became man."*

But here *Petara* may be any particular being, and may include a multitude of gods. There are other theories of creation or cosmogony, but they cannot be examined here.

There are no special observances in direct honour of *Salampan-dai*. In the *Besant*, she is brought to be present along with the *Petaras*. But this great spirit, never, I presume, visible in her own person, is supposed to have a manifestation in the realm of visible things in a creature something like a frog, which is also called *Salampandai*. Naturally this creature is regarded with reverence, and must not be killed. If it goes up into a Dyak house, they offer it sacrifice, and let it go again, but it is very seldom seen. It is one with the unseen spirit. The noise it makes is said to be the sound of the spirit's hammer, as she works at her anvil. So intimate is the connection that what is attributed to the one, is also attributed to the other. The creature is supposed to be somewhere near the house, whenever a child is born: if it approaches from behind, they say the child will be girl; if in front, a boy. In this case we have an instance of direct nature worship, and it is not the only one to be found amongst the Dyaks.

Pulang Gana is the tutelary deity of the soil, the spirit presiding over the whole work of rice-farming. According to a myth handed down in some parts, he is of human parentage. *Simpang-impang* at her first accouchement brought forth nothing but blood which was thrown away into a hole of the earth. This by some mystical means, became *Pulang Gana*, who therefore lives in the

bowels of the earth, and has sovereign rights over it. Other offspring of *Simpang-impang* were ordinary human beings, who in course of time began to cut down the old jungle to make farms. On returning to their work of felling trees the second morning, they found that every tree which had been cut down the day before was, by some unknown means, set up again, and growing as firmly as ever. Again they worked with their axes, but on coming to the ground the third morning they found the same extraordinary phenomenon repeated. They then determined to watch during the following night, in order to discover, if possible, the cause of the mystery. Under cover of darkness *Pulang Gana* came, and began to set the fallen trees upright as he had done before. They laid hold of him, and asked why he frustrated their labours. He replied: "Why do you wrong me, by not acknowledging my authority? I am *Pulang Gana*, your elder brother, who was thrown into the earth, and now I hold dominion over it. Before attempting to cut down the jungle, why did you not borrow the land from me?" "How?" they asked. "By making me sacrifice and offering." Hence, Dyaks say, arose the custom of sacrificing to *Pulang Gana* at the commencement of the yearly farming operations, a custom now universal among them. Sometimes these yearly sacrifices are accompanied by festivals held in his honour—the *Gawei Batu*, and the *Gawei Benih*, the Festival of the Whetstones and the Festival of the Seed.

In the Dyak mind, spirits and magical virtues are largely associated with stones. Any remarkable rock, especially if isolated in position, is almost sure to be the object of some kind of cultus. Small stones of many kinds are kept as charms, and I have known a common glass marble inwrought with various colours passed off as the "egg of a star," and so greatly valued as being an infallible defence against disease, &c. The whetstones, therefore, although made from a common sandstone rock, are things of some mysterious importance. They sharpen the chopper and the axe which have to clear the jungle and prepare the farm. There is something more than mere matter about them, and they must be blessed. At the *Gawei Batu*, the neighbours are assembled to witness the ceremony and share in the feast, and the whetstones are arranged along the public verandah of the house, and the per-

formers go round and round them, chanting a request to *Pulang Gana* for his presence and aid, and for good luck to the farm. The result is supposed to be that *Pulang Gana* comes up from his subterranean abode to bestow his presence and occult influence, and a pig is then sacrificed to him. In the *Gawei Benih*, the proceeding is similar, but having the seed for its object.

Pulang Gana is, therefore, an important power in Dyak belief, as upon his good-will is supposed to depend, in great measure, the staff of life.

Singalang Burong must now be mentioned. His name probably means the Bird-Chief. Dyaks are great omen observers, and amongst the omens, the notes and flight of certain birds are the most important. These birds are regarded with reverence. On one occasion, when walking through the jungle, I shot one, a beautiful creature, and I asked a Dyak who was with me to carry it. He shrank from touching it with his fingers, and carefully wrapped it in leaves before carrying it. No doubt he regarded my act as somewhat impious. All the birds, to which this cultus is given, are supposed to be personifications and manifestations of the same number of beings in the spirit world, which beings are the sons-in-law of *Singalang Burong* ⁽¹⁾. As spirits they exist in human form, but are as swift in their movements as birds, thus uniting man and bird in one spirit-being. *Singalang Burong*, too, stands at the head of the Dyak pedigree. They trace their descent from him, either as a man who once lived on the earth, or as a spirit. From him they learnt the system of omens, and through the spirit birds, his sons-in-law, he still communicates with his descendants. One of their festivals is called, "Giving the birds to eat," that is, offering them a sacrifice.

But further, *Singalang Burong* may be said to be the Sea Dyak god of war, and the guardian spirit of brave men. He delights in war, and head-taking is his glory. When Dyaks have obtained a head, either by fair means or foul, they make a grand sacrifice

⁽¹⁾ It should be stated that *Singalang Burong* has his counter-part and manifestation in the world, in a fine white and brown hawk, which is called by his name.

and feast in his honour, and invoke his presence. But it is unnecessary to enlarge upon this, for some account of the Mars of Sea Dyak mythology has already appeared in the Straits Asiatic Journal. (See No. 2.)

Now, what with these beings, and with the *Petaras*, it is no wonder that the Dyak, when brought face to face with his own confessions, acknowledges himself in utter confusion on the whole subject of the powers above him; that he owns to worshipping anything which is supposed to have power to help him or hurt him—God or spirit, ghost of man or beast—all are to be revered and propitiated. When inconsistencies in his belief are pointed out, all he says is, that he does not understand it, that he simply believes and practices what his forefathers have handed down to him.

But it is to be observed, as significant, that in sickness, or the near prospect of death, it is not *Singalang Burong*, or *Pulang Gana*, or *Salampondai* (which by the way are not commonly called *Petara*); it is not *Kling*, or *Bungai*, *Nuiying*, or any other mythological hero that is thought of as the life-giver, but simply *Petara*, whatever may be the precise idea they attach to the term. The *antu* (spirit) indeed causes the sickness, and wants to kill, and so has to be scared away; but *Petara* is regarded as the saving power. If an invalid is apparently beyond all human skill, it is *Petara* alone who can help him. If he dies, it is *Petara* who has allowed the life to pass away by not coming to the rescue. The Dyak may have groped about in a life-long polytheism, but something like a feeling after the One True Unknown seems to return at the close of the mortal pilgrimage. The only thing which implies the contrary, as far as I know, is, that very occasionally a function in honour of *Singalang Burong* has been held on behalf of a sick person, but it is exceedingly rare.

Although the whole conception of *Petara* is far from an exalted one, yet it is good being. Except as far as causing or allowing human creatures to die may be regarded by them as signs of a malevolent disposition, no evil is attributed to *Petara*. It is a power altogether on the side of justice and right. The ordeal of diving is an appeal to *Petara* to declare for the innocent and overthrow the guilty. *Petara* "cannot be wrong, cannot be un-

"clean." *Petara* approves of industry, of honesty, of purity of speech, of skill in word and work. *Petara Ini Andan* exhorts to "spread a mat for the traveller, to be quick in giving rice to the hungry, not to be slow to give water to the thirsty, to joke with those who have heaviness at heart, and to encourage with talk the slow of speech; not to give the fingers to stealing, nor to allow the heart to be bad." Immorality among the unmarried is supposed to bring a plague of rain upon the earth, as a punishment inflicted by *Petara*. It must be atoned for with sacrifice and fine. In a function which is sometimes held to procure fine weather, the excessive rain is represented as the result of the immorality of two young people. *Petara* is invoked, the offenders are banished from their home, and the bad weather is said to cease. Every district traversed by an adulterer is believed to be accursed of the gods until the proper sacrifice has been offered. Thus in general *Petara* is against man's sin; but over and above moral offences they have invented many sins, which are simply the infringement of *pemate*, or *tabu*—things trifling and superstitious, yet they are supposed to expose the violators to the wrath of the gods, and prevent the bestowal of their gift; and thus the whole subject of morality is degraded and perverted.

The prevailing idea Dyaks commonly entertain of *Petara* is that of the preserver of men. In the song of the head feast, when the messengers, in going up to the skies to fetch *Singalang Burong* down, pass the house of *Petara*, they invite him to the feast, but he replies: "I cannot go down, for mankind would come to grief in my absence. Even when I wink or go to bathe, they cut themselves, or fall down." *Petara* does not leave his habitations, for he takes care of men, and so far as he fails in this, he fails in his duty. So in an invocation said by the *manangs*, when they wave the sacrificial fowl over the sick:—

*Laboh daun buloh,
Tangkap ikan dungan;
Antu kah munoh,
Petara naroh ngembuan.*

*Laboh daun buloh,
Tangkap ikan mplasi ;
Antu kah munoh,
Petara ngaku menyadi.*

*Laboh daun buloh,
Tangkap ikan semah ;
Antu kah munoh,
Petara ngambu sa-rumah.*

*Laboh daun buloh,
Tangkap ikan juak ;
Antu kah munoh,
Petara ngaku anak.*

When the bambu leaf falls,
And is caught by the *dungan* fish ;
And the *antu* wants to kill,
Petara puts in safe preservation.

When the bambu leaf falls,
And is caught by the *mplasi* fish,
And the *antu* wants to kill,
Petara will confess a brother.

When the bambu leaf falls,
And is caught by the *semah* fish ;
And the *antu* wants to kill,
Petara will claim him as of his household.

When the bambu leaf falls,
And is caught by the *juak* fish ;
And the *antu* wants to kill,
Petara will confess a child.

When human life droops as a falling leaf, and the evil spirits, like hungry fish, are ready to swallow it up, then *Petara* comes in and claims the life as his, his child, his brother, and preserves it alive. The ceremony of the *Besant* is an elaboration of this idea, an idea to which, above all others, the Dyaks cling ; for the world

is full, they think, of evil spirits ever on the alert to them, but the subject of these *antus* opens up a new field of thought which cannot be entered now.

Petaras are not worshipped in temples, nor through the medium of idols. Their idea of gods corresponds so closely to the idea of men, the one rising so little above the other, that probably they have never felt the necessity of representing *Petara* by any special material form. *Petara* is their own shadow projected into the higher regions. Any conception men form of God must be more or less anthropomorphic, more especially the conception of the savage. He "invests God with bodily attributes. As man's "knowledge changes, his idea of God changes; as he mounts "the scale of existence, his consciousness becomes clearer and "more luminous, and his continual idealization of his better self "is an ever improving reflex of the divine essence." (1)



(1) Origin and Development of Religious Beliefs. S. BARING GOULD. Vol. i., p. 187.